

# PARENTING WORKBOOK



## Setting Boundaries and Applying Rewards and Consequences



A project of the Family Involvement Committee  
of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers  
and the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission

Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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### INTRODUCTION

All households need rules to create a home that is safe and supportive. Rules provide boundaries around acceptable and unacceptable behavior, thereby giving children a clear and predictable environment. Rewards for good behavior are equally, if not more, important. Rewards provide positive reinforcement and encouragement for desired behavior.



- To set behavior boundaries for your youth and provide consequences when those boundaries are not followed

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### SETTING BOUNDARIES SURVEY (PRE-ASSESSMENT)

For each statement, circle the number that best describes your experience.

A. I/we enforce household rules in our family

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

B. My/our child follows the household rules

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

C. I/we reward my/our child's good behavior

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

D. My/our child accepts the consequences of breaking household rules

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

E. I/we have the skills to respond effectively when my/our child does not follow household rules

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

### QUICK TIPS CARDS



<p><b>Guidelines for Meaningful Rewards</b></p> <p>They should be...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Genuine</b></li><li>2. <b>Customized</b> to the child's unique traits or circumstances</li><li>3. <b>Specific</b> to the behavior demonstrated</li><li>4. <b>Meaningful</b> to the individual</li></ol>	<p><b>Three-Step Process for Establishing Rewards</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Explain why you want to provide rewards for following household rules</li><li>2. Ask your child to identify the kinds of rewards that are most meaningful to them</li><li>3. Agree on which rewards you will consider for which behaviors and write them down</li></ol>
<p><b>Guidelines for Enforcing Rules</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Be <b>consistent</b></li><li>2. Apply the consequences <b>swiftly</b></li><li>3. Be <b>fair</b>, matching the severity of the behavior to the consequence</li><li>4. Be <b>understanding</b>: avoid being judgmental</li></ol>	<p><b>Five Steps to Applying Consequences</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Explain that a rule was broken</li><li>2. Discuss alternatives the youth had</li><li>3. Ask for a commitment to use the alternative next time</li><li>4. Give the appropriate consequence and reason</li><li>5. Tell the youth that you care for them</li></ol>

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House rules are meant to create a safe and supportive environment. They provide boundaries to explain acceptable and unacceptable behavior.



### Part A: Your Household Rules

In your home, rules are more likely to be followed when they meet the criteria below. Put a checkmark (✓) beside each of these criteria if it is true for your household.

In my household, rules are...	Place a checkmark if this is true
...created with my child	
...fair and reasonable	
...limited in number	
...clear, not confusing	
...written down	
...expected to apply to all, including parents when appropriate	

# Parenting Workbook

## Setting Boundaries and Applying Rewards and Consequences

The following are examples of possible topics for household rules. Review the examples and then, in the section at the bottom of the page, list no more than eight household rules that you have for your child.

### Possible Topics for House Rules

Respect  
Guns/weapons  
Gang colors  
Dating  
Drugs  
Social networking  
Friends  
Disrespect  
Use of computer/internet  
Cell phones  
Mealtime  
Communication  
Physical violence  
Use of vehicle  
Curfew  
Chores  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Examining Your Household Rules.** The household rules that apply to your child are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following?

1. I am satisfied with the house rules.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

2. My child accepts our house rules.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

3. My child follows the house rules.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**Preparing to Change Your Household Rules.** If you think you need to change your household rules, develop a plan by following these steps:

**First,** determine what changes you want to make. List those here.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Second,** develop a plan to discuss house rules with your child. When is the best time? How do you want to introduce the subject? What will you do if your child reacts in anger? How will you include your child's input in the rules?

**Third,** with another person you respect or in front of a mirror, practice introducing the subject to your child. Make sure your message is compassionate. Keep practicing until you are comfortable with the message.

**Fourth,** discuss with your child the need to change the household rules. Develop an agreement between you and your child.

**Fifth,** put the plan in writing, sign it, and put it in action. Assess the results over time; adjust if needed.

### Practice Session

Practice inviting your child to create house rules with you.

What would you say?  
How would you say it?



**Making a plan.** If you determine that you need to change your household rules, write down your plan.

I will \_\_\_\_\_ by (date) \_\_\_\_\_

I will \_\_\_\_\_ by (date) \_\_\_\_\_

I will \_\_\_\_\_ by (date) \_\_\_\_\_

# Parenting Workbook

## Setting Boundaries and Applying Rewards and Consequences



**Assignment.** If you decide that you need to create written household rules or to change your existing household rules, apply the five-step process. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

### Results from Changing Household Rules

Step #	Step	What went well with this step?	What did not go well with this step?
1	Determine what rules need to be changed		
2	Develop a plan to discuss the rules with your child		
3	With another person or in front of a mirror, practice introducing the subject to your child		
4	Discuss the rules with your child and develop an agreement		
5	Put the plan in writing and sign		

**Note:** On the next two pages is an example of house rules and a blank form you can use.

### Household Rules Agreement (Example)

**Rules.** The following are the household rules and expectations:

1. Keep your room clean and respect the general living area for the rest of the family
2. Keep curfew of 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 11:00 p.m. on weekends
3. No smoking in the house
4. No friends of any kind in the home without a parent/guardian present
5. Be respectful of others; no swearing, hitting, or angry outbursts
6. Complete daily/weekly chores
7. No phone or TV at mealtime
8. Tell the truth
9. School is your first priority (attend classes, get Cs or better grades, get homework done before TV, computer, or social activities)

**Consequences.** If I violate the household rules, these are the possible consequences:

1. Loss of privileges (e.g., cell phone/computer or driving)
2. No video games
3. Loss of free time (grounding)
4. No TV
5. Extra chores
6. Earlier curfew

**Rewards.** If I follow the household rules, these are the possible rewards:

1. Greater freedom (e.g., later curfew)
2. Game night (cards, board/video games) with family or family and friends
3. New purchase (sneakers, nails done, etc.)
4. Taking a chore away
5. Movie night with family or family and friends
6. Increased privileges with phone, music, or computer
7. Favorite meal

### Signatures.

Guardian/parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Household Rules Agreement Form

**Rules.** The following are the household rules and expectations:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Consequences.** If I violate the household rules, these are the possible consequences:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Rewards.** If I follow the household rules, these are the possible rewards:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Signatures.

Guardian/parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Assignment Review:** After you finish changing your household rules, describe the results.

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What needs to be adjusted?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Part B: Rewarding Good Behavior



**Rewards and Incentives.** Studies indicate that the use of rewards can be a powerful tool to enhance motivation and promote positive behavior. This is not a surprise as most of us can relate to this. We tend to repeat those behaviors for which we are rewarded and avoid those behaviors for which we suffer consequences. The developing adolescent brain is actually quite responsive to rewards, especially in comparison to the brains of people of other ages. We can affirm movement in the right direction, even small steps, by providing something pleasant or taking away something unpleasant. Sometimes, a simple word of praise can be very meaningful, such as telling a child how proud we are of their getting a job.

**How are you doing?** For rewards to be effective, they must meet certain criteria. They must be genuine, immediate, specific, and meaningful. Answer columns B and C for yourself.

Column A Criteria for meaningful rewards:	Column B I do a good job with this:	Column C I can improve by...
<b>Genuine:</b> My child must know that I mean what I say and that I really do appreciate the behavior I am rewarding.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	

Column A Criteria for meaningful rewards:	Column B I do a good job with this:	Column C I can improve by...
<b>Immediate:</b> The reward should be applied soon after the behavior. As an example, rewarding my child for doing their chores without being asked a week after they complete their chores is not very impactful; it is "old news."	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	
<b>Customized:</b> Rewards or affirmations should be tailored to my child's unique traits or circumstances. For example, if my child prefers to stay at home and I give them more freedom, it will not feel like a reward to them.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	
<b>Specific:</b> Vague or general affirmations are not as effective as those that are specific. For example, saying "You have been working hard and making great progress controlling your anger and walking away from your brother when he upsets you" is more specific and effective than simply saying "Good job."	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	
<b>Meaningful:</b> A reward is meaningful when it involves a behavior that my child has been consciously trying to change. For example, telling my child that I am proud of them for good school attendance is not meaningful if they are naturally motivated to go to school. On the other hand, if my child consistently looks disheveled and sloppy but they have worked hard to take care of themselves and dress appropriately, recognizing this will be meaningful.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	

**Note:** Providing rewards does not work for everyone in the same way. For example, your child

- may apply pressure to get a reward when you are not convinced that their behavior warrants it
- may become dependent on rewards instead of behaving a certain way because it is the right thing to do.

You want your child to become independent and develop habits that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Therefore, you will need to decide what is best for your child, depending on their traits.

**Thinking About Possible Rewards.** Look at the list of rewards you might offer your child for good behavior and check each one that you think your child may like.

Possible Reward	My Child Would Like This
Increased computer time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attending a special event, like a concert	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased cell phone access	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased time with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
A gift certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>
A meal they especially like	<input type="checkbox"/>
New clothes	<input type="checkbox"/>
A movie	<input type="checkbox"/>
A subscription to a streaming music service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expanded driving privileges	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in a sport	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in a hobby	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extended curfew	<input type="checkbox"/>
Repainting or decorating your child's bedroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relaxed dating rules	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased access to video games	<input type="checkbox"/>
Later bedtime	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Three-Step Process for Establishing Rewards.** It is best to involve your child in establishing rewards. You will want to ask their input and, in doing so, listen carefully for those rewards that are most meaningful to them. Follow these three steps:

### Step 1

**Explain why you want to not only establish rules but also to provide rewards for following the rules.**

**You might say...**

*I want to talk about rewards. You should be rewarded for following house rules. The more responsibly you behave, the more you should earn privileges. How does that sound to you?*

### Step 2

**Ask your child to identify the kinds of rewards that are most meaningful.**

**You might say...**

*Let's start by listing the kinds of rewards that are meaningful to you. Why don't you list on paper up to 10 things that you would like to receive if you follow house rules.*

**Did you catch your child doing something right today?**

**That's an opportunity to say...**

Keep Up  
the  
Good  
Work



### Step 3

**Agree on which rewards you will consider for which behaviors and write them down.**

**You might say...**

*Let's now talk about how the rewards tie into the house rules and write down which rewards you can receive if you follow the house rules. To do this, we need to be specific about what needs to be done and how well it needs to be done.*

# Parenting Workbook

## Setting Boundaries and Applying Rewards and Consequences



**Assignment.** In the next week or two, use the three-step process to establish rewards. Write down the results of your discussion with your child and give them the chart below as a reminder.

When you do this...	Your reward will be...

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**Assignment Review:** After you finish establishing rewards, describe the results.

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What needs to be adjusted?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Part C: Holding Firm to Rules

**Guidelines for Enforcing Rules.** Youth will naturally challenge household rules in order to test their independence. This is part of their natural learning process that helps them learn respect and gain emotional control. It is an opportunity for you to model appropriate expectations. As parents, we must consistently enforce rules or they lose their meaning, and violations of the rules will continue to occur. Enforcing rules should be done with respect and with a caring attitude for the youth. To effectively enforce rules, follow these four principles:

- 1. Consistent:** Apply the rules and consequences consistently; do not apply them sometimes but not always.
- 2. Swift:** Apply the consequences as soon after the rule infraction as possible; do not delay.
- 3. Fair:** Give consequences that match the severity of the behavior, ensuring that your child understood the rules and consequences before any misbehavior occurred.
- 4. Understanding:** If rule-breaking does occur, provide your child with the opportunity to offer their perspective, to be heard, and to explore how they could have made a more responsible decision. Listen without judgment. This give-and-take communication may result in a decision to change some rules.

Assess how well you are applying these four principles by drawing a line from each item in column A to the answer in column B. You can use the answers in column B more than once.

Column A	Column B
I always apply the rules, and I apply consequences whenever my child breaks the rules (consistent).	Strongly Disagree
I apply the consequences as soon after the rule infraction as possible (swift).	Disagree
I give consequences that match the severity of the behavior (fair).	Agree
When my child breaks the rules, I give them the opportunity to offer their perspective before giving a consequence (understanding).	Strongly Agree

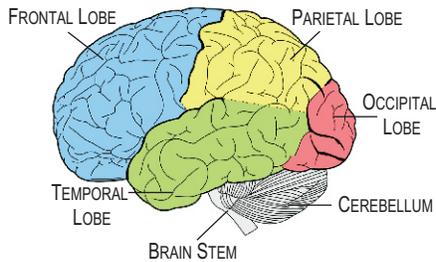
**Based on your self-assessment, list one area you would like to improve:**

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**Brain Development.** Now that you have rules that you and your child agreed to, it is important to be prepared for when your child breaks them...because they will occasionally break them. It is part of the developmental process. When they do break the rules, anticipate that they will push back and want to negotiate the consequences or renegotiate the rules. Understanding brain development in youth can help us put this in perspective, better understand youth behavior, and help us see these rule violations as opportunities to help our child develop lifelong skills.

Adolescent behavior is influenced by physical changes in the body, including in the brain. Science indicates that adolescent hormones are “ramped up,” resulting in difficulty controlling their emotions and a tendency to act impulsively, which can lead to breaking house rules and getting into trouble. Adolescent brains are also preparing for independence, resulting in youth exploring creative expression and pushing back at the status quo. Because adolescents’ social life is so important to them, boundaries that limit their social activities create particular stress and agitation. Accepting rules and the consequences for their actions may be difficult for youth if it affects their ability to seek rewards, socialize, and explore independence.

We can help by creating boundaries, involving our child in the creation of the rules, empathizing with how difficult it is for them to accept consequences, and teaching them how to handle situations differently next time.

**What is one thought you have about your child’s behavior or your response to that behavior after reading about brain development?**

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**Five-Step Process for Applying Consequences.** Follow these five steps when applying consequences for broken rules. These steps seek to apply firm and consistent enforcement of the rules while making these incidents opportunities for learning.

STEP	EXAMPLE
1. Explain that your child disobeyed a rule.	<i>You know that your curfew is 10:00 p.m. Tell me why you did not get home until 11:15 p.m.</i>
2. Discuss alternatives they had.	<i>What else could you have done that would have resulted in not getting into trouble?</i>
3. Ask your child for a commitment to use an alternative action next time (describe it).	<i>Can you give me your word that you will call me the next time you don't have a ride home and will be late?</i>
4. Give the appropriate consequence and reason.	<i>You know that there are consequences for breaking the rules. We discussed this before. Therefore, you will be grounded for one week. Your grounding will end next Thursday night.</i>
5. Tell them that you care for them.	<i>These things happen and we will learn from them. I hope you know that I care about you.</i>

**Demonstration.** Your child's case manager will demonstrate the skill of applying consequences by using the scenario below. Discuss what went well and what could be improved.

**Practice.** Practice the five-step process for applying consequences using the scenario below or a scenario that is likely to happen in your household. You can practice with your child's case manager, or practice by yourself in front of a mirror.

### Practice Scenario

*Your son smoked a cigarette in the house. You have a rule against smoking—especially in the house, where there is fire hazard. This is the second time he has broken this rule. The agreed-upon consequence is that he gives up control of his money for a month.*



**Assignment.** It is time to put the five-step process for applying consequences into practice. It may seem somewhat easy to use this process when you're practicing in front of a mirror or with a supportive adult. But, in real life, things can get heated and emotional. When that happens, it will be important for you to take a couple minutes to gather your thoughts.

In the next week or two, use the five-step process if your child breaks one of your household rules. Remember to follow the principles of consistent, swift, fair, and understanding.

**Keep track of how well you enforced the household rules you established with your child. Then, answer the following by circling the number that best describes your experience.**

**Since we established the household rules...**

A. I have been applying the consequences when my child breaks the rules

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
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B. I have been applying the consequences soon after the rule-breaking occurs

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

C. I have been giving consequences that match the severity of the behavior

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
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D. I have been calm and given my child the opportunity to share their perspective before giving the consequence

Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------

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**Assignment Review.** After you practice the five-step process for applying consequences, describe the results.

**What was the situation, or what rule was broken?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How did you respond?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### Part D: Effective Use of Authority

**Three-step process for effectively using parental authority.** Sometimes, despite our best efforts, our child continues to violate the rules instead of following them. It is not healthy to engage in prolonged conflict. When you have exhausted your efforts to come up with a satisfactory solution, you will need to exert your authority as a parent. The skill you would use is called the "effective use of authority." This skill involves giving youth two choices, explaining the consequences of each one, and having them make a choice. Using this skill can reduce the stress on you and your child. You would not use this skill if your child threatens to do something that would cause severe harm.

The steps to the effective use of authority are as follows:

STEP	EXAMPLE
1. Present two choices and the consequences of each one (avoid exaggerating the negative consequences).	<i>You can continue to act disrespectfully and the result will be that you are grounded for a week. Or, you can calm down, accept the consequences we discussed when we created the house rules, and have your grounding end in three days for good behavior.</i>
2. Instruct your child to choose one option (encourage compliance).	<i>It is your choice. Which of these options do you choose?</i>
3. Follow through with the appropriate consequences.	<i>You picked the option that is in your best interest. I am proud of you. You are grounded for a week, but if you follow the grounding without any problems, I will lift it after three days.</i>

**Demonstration.** Your child's case manager will demonstrate the skill of applying the three-step process by using the scenario below. Discuss what went well and what could be improved.

**Practice.** Practice the three-step process for effectively using authority using the scenario below or a scenario that is likely to happen in your household. You can practice with your child's case manager, or practice by yourself in front of a mirror.

### Practice Scenario

*Your house rule forbids the use of cell phones at the dinner table. Your daughter continues to use her cell phone at the dinner table, including tonight, despite your constant reminders. When you tell her to put down her phone, she starts to argue with you. This is a conversation you have had many times before.*



**Assignment.** It is time to put the three-step process of effectively using authority into practice. It may seem somewhat easy to use this process when you're practicing in front of a mirror or with a supportive adult. But, in real life, things can get heated and emotional. When that happens, it will be important for you to take a couple minutes to gather your thoughts.

In the next week or two, use the three-step process for effectively using authority if your child breaks one of your household rules and you feel as if any further discussion about the rule or consequences will lead to further conflict. Each time you use this process, write what went well and what did not go so well.

**Situation 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Situation 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Situation 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Situation 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What worked?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What didn't work so well?** \_\_\_\_\_



Congratulations, you have completed the **Setting Boundaries and Applying Rewards and Consequences** workbook. To help you remember the key lessons you learned, complete the statements below.

**Household Rules.** We needed to change the household rules by:

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**Enforcing Household Rules.** The guidelines for enforcing rules (be consistent, swift, and fair; show understanding) that I do well and the one that I need to work on are:

Do well: \_\_\_\_\_

Need to work on: \_\_\_\_\_

**Rewarding Good Behavior.** In order for rewards to be effective, they need to be given immediately after the behavior is noticed, customized to my child, given for specific behavior, and be meaningful to my child. The following is the reward(s) that my child finds most meaningful:

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**Effective Use of Authority.** I should use my parental authority (i.e., give my child two choices, explain the consequences of each one, and have them make a choice) sparingly. It is appropriate to use authority effectively when:

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### SETTING BOUNDARIES SURVEY (POST-ASSESSMENT)

For each statement, circle the number that best describes your experience.

A. I/we enforce household rules in our family

Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always  
1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

B. My/our child follows the household rules

Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always  
1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

C. I/we reward my/our child's good behavior

Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always  
1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

D. My/our child accepts the consequences of breaking household rules

Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always  
1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

E. I/we have the skills to respond effectively when my/our child does not follow household rules

Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Always  
1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

F. I feel my/our skills in setting boundaries have improved

Strongly Disagree          Disagree          Agree          Strongly Agree

G. I feel my/our skills in applying rewards and consequences have improved

Strongly Disagree          Disagree          Agree          Strongly Agree

Comments:

